

Six Ways to Help Your Employees Execute Your Vision and Strategy

1. Keep explaining the “why” until they get it.

Remember that people are far more likely to execute a strategy wholeheartedly — even if they disagree with it —if they understand the “why.” To paraphrase Nietzsche: “People can handle almost any What, if they understand the Why.”

If you weren't involved in the decision, i.e. mid-level manager, do your homework so you thoroughly understand the rationale. Get feedback on whether your explanation makes sense. Explain the reason for the initiative to someone not in your company and see if they understand it and can see its validity. Tweak your message until it makes sense to someone without your background knowledge of the situation.

Also, don't assume explaining it one time will suffice. Often when people are shocked by news, their brains lose their ability to process information.

2. Anticipate objections and generate valid answers.

If you are part of the senior team that made the decision, this should be straightforward. If you weren't and don't have enough information to answer some of the potential objections and questions that might be raised, seek out the answers.

Here's an example of how you can frame your request: “I want to make sure I present a compelling message to the team, so part of what I've been doing is making a list of potential questions and objections. There were four that I couldn't answer because I don't have the information. Can I get your take on them?”

3. Present a compelling “future story.”

Describe what this new approach will do for them, their customers, and the company. Describe what you envision things being like 6-12 months in the future.

Think in terms of telling “future stories” such as: “So for instance...with this new approach...when an existing client does X, instead of Y happening, we'll now respond by doing Z...which will enable you to new, desired response and the customers to get whatever increased value the new employee response will deliver.” Notice how asking this makes you look like the nothing-short-of-excellence person you are.

4. Make sure you address the WII-FM for all parties.

As you describe the future story, make sure you describe how this will benefit them (the WII-FM, or the “what's in it for me?”), their customers, and the company (and therefore their job security).

5. Don't BS.

While you want to explicitly state the good that this change will produce, you don't want to be dishonest. As you know from being on the receiving end of "company spin," all it takes is one dishonest message from a leader to irrevocably damage trust.

You also don't want to be that kind of leader, right?

So, don't try to pretend certain outcomes or changes are a great thing when they actually are a net loss for your team. Also, don't try to hide from the downside realities. Honestly acknowledge them.

6. Relate human-to-human, not role-to-role.

Often, I see leaders putting on their "game face" and relating as "The Leader," rather than being a genuine human being.

This alienates employees. Don't be afraid to be real, to be authentic. Judiciously share the concerns you have about its effect on your people and how you took that into consideration. Interviews with employees at client companies going through downsizings have repeatedly shown me how powerfully it affects employees when they can see — and hear — how much their leader cares about them and the impact their decisions will have on them.

The more real you are, the more "bondable" you become, and therefore...the more your people will want to do their best for you.

Source: David Lee